Local snippets:

An old local legend maintains that there is a secret underground passage running from Hyde Farm to Aston Manor, another former religious house, one and a quarter miles away.

The name "Roade" is derived from an old term meaning "the cleared land."

One of the last drivers on the old Towcester to Ravenstone Wood railway used to keep a shotgun in his cab to catch rabbits for his supper en route.

Roade cutting on the main London railway line was excavated in 1834. The project, supervised by Robert Stephenson, employed 800 men and boys and "3000 barrels" of gunpowder were used to blast out the tunnel and a half mile long cutting. Steam engines had to be run continuously for eighteen months during excavations to pump out water from loose beds of slate at the bottom of the cutting.

It was an old village custom for villagers to take their Sunday joints to the bakehouse for cooking as their own ovens were small and inadequate. It was a matter of pride for the young boys who collected the steaming joints to have them on the kitchen table with the gravy still bubbling.

A Walkers' Code:

* Always try to keep to the path to avoid trespass. If the path is obstructed you are allowed to seek a reasonable way round the obstruction taking care to avoid causing damage. Please report the obstruction to the Highway authority.

* Remember to close gates behind you. Straying stock can cause damage or spread disease and carelessness may lead to tragedy.

* To avoid harm or distress to farm animals and wildlife it is best to leave dogs at home. If you have to bring them they should be kept on a leash.

* If your route takes you onto a road keep to the right, facing oncoming traffic, and use the verge if one exists.

* Always wear suitable clothing and footwear for the season and remember to allow plenty of time to complete your chosen walk.

* Remember that every piece of land in the countryside belongs to someone, so please treat it with respect and other walkers will be made welcome.

If you experience any difficulty on your walk, such as barbed wire, locked gates or damaged stiles and footbridges, please report them to the County Surveyor, Northampton House, Northampton. Telephone: 235 701

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Your general comments on this leaflet and the route will be welcomed by the County Leisure and Libraries Officer, 27, Guildhall Road, Northampton. Telephone: 202 82

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Blisworth Hill Railway

A primitive railway, the county's first, was built in 1800 to link the two completed sections of canal at Stoke Bruerne and Blisworth, prior to the opening of the Blisworth Tunnel.

For five years horse-drawn trains of open and flat wagons rumbled over Blisworth Hill. When the tunnel was opened the railway was dismantled. The map shows where the modern footpath and towpath now follow its old course.

Blisworth Tunnel

Blisworth tunnel was a major undertaking for the day. It was opened in 1800 after three years of excavations which had cost £6000 or nearly £30 per yard.

Originally there were no airshafts, but four of these local landmarks were added in 1819. The one near Buttermilk Hall was added after a fatal accident in mid-tunnel involving a Birmingham seamswoman in 1861. Extensive repair works were carried out in 1986.

The Disused Railway Line

This line was part of the Stratford-on-Avon and Hatton Junction Railway. An attempt to run a passenger service on this line between Worcester and Rotherstone Wood lasted only four months during the winter of 1893. The line was then used mainly for goods traffic, particularly local stone, until its closure in 1958.

Disused railway lines such as this now provide useful wildlife habitats in the countryside.

Stoke Bruerne

The Waterways Museum is a major tourist attraction in Northamptonshire. There are shops and a free house alongside the canal.

KEY:

- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Canal towpath
- F.P. Fingerpost
- S. Stile
- Gate
- Viewpoint

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